

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PARIS 20868 01 OF 03 191405Z  
ACTION EUR-08

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R 191351Z JUL 77  
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5861  
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AMCONSUL LYON  
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE  
AMCONSUL NICE  
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 20868

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, FR  
SUBJECT: MODELS FOR 1978 ELECTIONS

SUMMARY. A CONFIDENTIAL MINISTRY OF INTERIOR STUDY (PROTECT CAREFULLY THROUGHOUT) HAS COME TO TWO UNEXPECTED CONCLUSIONS THAT DEFY THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM OF ELECTION ANALYSTS. THESE CONCLUSIONS ARE (A) THAT THE LEFT WOULD NEED ONLY SLIGHTLY MORE THAN 50 PERCENT OF THE POPULAR VOTE IN NEXT MARCH'S LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS TO WIN A MAJORITY OF THE SEATS IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (UNTIL NOW MOST STUDENTS OF THIS SUBJECT CONCLUDED THAT GOF GERRYMANDERING WOULD REQUIRE CLOSE TO A 52 PERCENT POPULAR VOTE FOR A LEFT PARLIAMENTARY VICTORY); AND (B) IF PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION WERE INTRODUCED, AN IDEA WHICH WAS CONSIDERED BY THE GOF EARLIER THIS YEAR BUT NOW PUT OFF UNTIL AFTER NEXT MARCH, THE LEFT WOULD RECEIVE A MINIMUM OF A 2 PERCENT BONUS OVER THEIR CHANCES UNDER THE PRESENT SINGLE-UNIT SYSTEM. THAT IS, THE  
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 PARIS 20868 01 OF 03 191405Z

LEFT COULD WIN WITH ONLY 48 PERCENT OF THE POPULAR VOTE, IF PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION WERE ADOPTED. THE TABLE IN PARAGRAPH 3 BELOW PRESENTS A MODEL INTO WHICH FUTURE POLLS OF VOTER INTENTIONS CAN BE PLUGGED TO DETERMINE THE PROBABLE RESULTS IN TERMS OF SEATS IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. END SUMMARY.

1. BACKGROUND: THIS REPORT IS INTENDED TO SET THE STAGE FOR UNDERSTANDING THE POLLS ON VOTERS' INTENTIONS THAT WILL CASCADE ONTO THE FRENCH SCENE STARTING SEPTEMBER. THE SETTING HAS ALREADY BEEN CONFUSED BY QUESTIONABLE ASSERTIONS BY LEADING POLITICIANS: GISCARD'S CONTENTION THAT THE MAJORITY OF THE ELECTORATE WAS ALREADY LEFT IN 1974 AND ONLY HIS OWN ENGAGEMENT IN THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE SAVED THE COUNTRY FROM A MITTERRAND VICTORY; GISCARD'S STATEMENT EARLIER THIS YEAR THAT THE GOVERNING COALITION IS NOW 4 TO 6 PERCENT BEHIND THE LEFT AND THAT IT CAN CATCH UP BEFORE NEXT MARCH IF THE MAJORITY PULLS ITSELF TOGETHER. FORMER INTERIOR MINISTER PONIATOWSKI, IN A HIGHLY CRITICIZED STATEMENT, READ THE LEFT'S 51.5 PERCENT SCORE IN LAST MARCH'S MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS AS A SLIGHT DROP FROM ITS 52 PERCENT IN THE PREVIOUS YEAR'S CANTONALS (WHICH INVOLVED ONLY HALF THE ELECTORATE). NOT TO BE OUTDONE IN INTERPRETING FIGURES HIS OWN WAY, RPR PRESIDENT CHIRAC CLAIMS THE PS HAS STAGNATED AT 30 PERCENT AND 160,000 MILITANTS, WHILE HIS MOVEMENT IS PICKING UP STEAM AND NOW REPRESENTS 25 PERCENT OF THE ELECTORATE AND 400,000 MILITANTS. PS ELECTION EXPERTS HAVE LATELY BEEN PUTTING THE LEFT IN THE 53-54 PERCENT BRACKET, WHILE MOST PUBLIC POLLS AND CURRENT GOF (INTERIOR MINISTRY) ESTIMATES ARE ALSO HOVERING AROUND THAT MARK. THESE LEVELS WOULD INDICATE A GRADUAL BUT STEADY INCREASE BY THE LEFT OVER THE

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PARIS 20868 01 OF 03 191405Z

LAST THREE YEARS.

2. WHAT THE INTERIOR MINISTRY STUDY IS NOT: THE INTERIOR STUDY IS NOT PICKING THE WINNER EIGHT MONTHS HENCE. IT IS MERELY CALCULATING WHAT THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY REPRESENTATION WILL BE, GIVEN DIFFERENT POPULAR VOTES (SEE BELOW). ITS DRAFTER LISTED THE VARIOUS (AND OBVIOUS) FACTORS WHICH SHOULD LEAD ONE TO BE CAUTIOUS, DESPITE INTERIOR'S OWN CURRENT POLLS, IN PREJUDGING THE RESULTS: THE SUCCESS OR LACK THEREOF OF THE BARRE PLAN; THE SOCIAL CLIMATE NEXT FALL AND SPRING; MAJORITY AND OPPOSITION COHESION; THE EFFECT OF HOLDING PRIMARIES IN THE MAJORITY AND WHETHER THE PRIMARIES WILL BE UNCONTROLLED OR ORGANIZED; THE EXTENT OF DISCIPLINE IN TRANSFERRING FIRST ROUND TO SECOND ROUND VOTES, PARTICULARLY FROM THE PS TO PCF AND CENTER TO THE RPR; BARRE'S IMAGE AS A NATIONAL POLITICAL LEADER; THE IMPORTANCE OF NATIONAL ISSUES, AS DISTINCT FROM THE PREDOMINANTLY LOCAL ISSUES IN THE CANTONAL AND MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS; LAST MINUTE VOTE CHANGE-OVERS; AND THE INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE.

3. RESULTS UNDER PRESENT, SINGLE-UNIT SYSTEM: AFTER AN

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 PARIS 20868 02 OF 03 191409Z  
ACTION EUR-08

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 PARIS 20868

LIMDIS

EXHAUSTIVE ANALYSIS OF EVERY LEGISLATIVE ELECTION HELD DURING THE FIFTH REPUBLIC, THE STUDY CONCLUDES THAT THE PRESENT VOTING SYSTEM AMPLIFIES IN THE ASSEMBLY THE POPULAR VOTE OF THE WINNING PARTIES OR COALITION. THIS "INJUSTICE" IS THE RESULT OF NO PROPORTIONAL CORRECTIVE (SEE PARA 5). IN THEORY, IF ONE COALITION WERE TO WIN 51 PERCENT OF THE POPULAR VOTE IN EACH DISTRICT, IT WOULD WIN 100 PERCENT OF THE SEATS. IN PRACTICE, THESE REPRESENTATIONAL INEQUITIES ALMOST BALANCE THEMSELVES OUT IN THE TOTAL OF THE 490 DISTRICTS; BUT A SLIGHT EDGE IS STILL GIVEN TO THE WINNING COALITION, AND THIS ADVANTAGE IS INCREASINGLY AMPLIFIED IN THE ASSEMBLY, THE LARGER ITS ABSOLUTE VOTE. ANOTHER WAY OF LOOKING AT THIS PHENOMENON IS TO UNDERSTAND THAT A RELATIVELY SMALL NUMBER OF VOTES WILL MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE IN THE ASSEMBLY. IN FRANCE WHERE 1 PERCENT OF THE VOTE IS ROUGHLY EQUIVALENT TO 250,000 VOTES, A CHANGE OF 3 PERCENT (750,000 VOTES) OVER THE 50 PERCENT THRESHOLD WOULD GIVE

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PARIS 20868 02 OF 03 191409Z

THE WINNING COALITION A 9 PERCENT GAIN IN THE ASSEMBLY AND AN EXTREMELY COMFORTABLE MAJORITY OF NEARLY 90 SEATS. THE WAY THIS SYSTEM WOULD TRANSLATE A POPULAR VOTE IN 1978 INTO ASSEMBLY SEATS FOR THE 473 DISTRICTS IN METROPOLITAN FRANCE IS AS FOLLOWS:

POPULAR VOTE	ASSEMBLY SEATS
48 PERCENT	44 PERCENT OR 208 SEATS (OUT OF 473)
49 PERCENT	47 PERCENT OR 223 SEATS
50 PERCENT	50 PERCENT OR 237 SEATS
51 PERCENT	53 PERCENT OR 251 SEATS
52 PERCENT	56 PERCENT OR 265 SEATS
53 PERCENT	59 PERCENT OR 280 SEATS
54 PERCENT	62 PERCENT OR 294 SEATS

4. COMMENT: TWO MINOR FACTORS, WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN THE ABOVE FIGURES, WILL ADJUST THE ABOVE FIGURES SLIGHTLY TO THE ADVANTAGE OF THE MAJORITY. DUE TO DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES, PARIS IS OVERREPRESENTED IN THE ASSEMBLY. SINCE PARIS IS MAINLY RPR, APPROXIMATELY 10 SEATS CAN BE ADDED TO THE MAJORITY'S SCORE. THE SAME CONSIDERATION IS TRUE FOR MOST OF THE 17 SEATS REPRESENTING THE OVERSEAS DEPARTMENTS WHICH WERE NOT INCLUDED IN THE STUDY. A FINAL SHORTCOMING OF THIS METHOD IS THAT IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO ESTIMATE THE NUMBER OF SEATS FOR EACH PARTY WITHIN THE TWO COALITIONS. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE METHOD IS MORE ACCURATE THAN A DISTRICT-BY-DISTRICT APPROACH, WHICH WOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT SUBJECTIVE FACTORS AND RUN THE RISK OF ACCUMULATING ERRORS. IT IS ALSO EXTREMELY PRACTICAL IN THAT IT CAN BE APPLIED, PRESUMABLY WITH A VERY SMALL MARGIN OF ERROR, TO FUTURE POLLS AND VOTING ESTIMATES. END COMMENT.

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PARIS 20868 02 OF 03 191409Z

MENT.

5. PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION (PR): BRIEF MENTION SHOULD BE MADE HERE TO PR BECAUSE ITS SURPRISE INTRODUCTION CANNOT BE COMPLETELY RULED OUT. IT WAS BEING SERIOUSLY STUDIED BY THE PRESIDENT'S STAFF EARLIER THIS YEAR BUT, AFTER IMPLACABLE OPPOSITION BY THE RPR, IT WAS SUBSEQUENTLY SHELVED. GISCARD HINTED IN HIS JULY 8 CARPENTRAS SPEECH (PARIS 20090) THAT HE WOULD INTRODUCE PR AFTER A MAJORITY VICTORY NEXT MARCH, AS A MEANS TOWARD BREAKING DOWN ELECTORAL BARRIERS BETWEEN THE TWO OPPOSING BLOCS. PR IN ITS FRENCH FORM, WHICH WAS USED IN THE

1945, 1946 AND 1956 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS, IS LESS THAN COMPLETELY PROPORTIONAL, FOR IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN BASED, AND PRESUMABLY WOULD BE IN THE FUTURE, ON THE SCALE OF THE DEPARTMENT RATHER THAN THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE. FOR THIS REASON, PARTIES WHICH ARE REPRESENTED AT A FAIRLY HIGH AND UNIFORM LEVEL IN MOST DEPARTMENTS ARE FAVORED OVER THOSE WITH REGIONAL CONCENTRATION. IN ADDITION, PR FAVORS THE COALITION WHICH SHOWS ITSELF MORE DISCIPLINED IN ITS VOTING HABITS (AGAIN, NOT THE CENTER). THE PARTIES WHICH WOULD BENEFIT FROM THESE TECHNICAL AND POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS ARE, IN DESCENDING ORDER, THE PCF, PS AND RPR. AN ANALYSIS OF THE EARLIER ELECTIONS CONDUCTED BY PR AND SIMULATIONS OF LATER ELECTIONS CONCLUDE THAT THE LEFT WOULD ONLY NEED 48 PERCENT OF THE POPULAR VOTE TO WIN A MAJORITY IN THE ASSEMBLY AND THAT ITS BONUS IN THE ASSEMBLY WOULD INCREASE FROM 2 TO 4 PERCENT AS ITS POPULAR VOTE INCREASED. THE FOLLOWING TABLE TRANSLATES THE POPULAR VOTE INTO ASSEMBLY SEATS FOR THE METROPOLITAN DISTRICTS (473 SEATS):

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 PARIS 20868 03 OF 03 191401Z  
ACTION EUR-08

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 03 PARIS 20868

LIMDIS

POPULAR VOTE	ASSEMBLY SEATS
FOR THE LEFT	
48 PERCENT	49.5 - 50.5 PERCENT OR 237 SEATS

49 PERCENT	51 - 51.5 PERCENT OR 243 SEATS
50 PERCENT	52.5 - 53 PERCENT OR 250 SEATS
51 PERCENT	53.5 - 54 PERCENT OR 255 SEATS
52 PERCENT	55 - 55.5 PERCENT OR 262 SEATS
53 PERCENT	56 - 57 PERCENT OR 270 SEATS
54 PERCENT	58 - 59 PERCENT OR 280 SEATS

6. CONCLUSIONS. THE PRESENT ELECTORAL SYSTEM IS LESS UNFAVORABLE TO THE MAJORITY THAN A PR SYSTEM. THE MAJORITY COULD WIN THE ELECTIONS UNDER THE PRESENT SYSTEM WITH 50 PERCENT OF THE POPULAR VOTE, OR EVEN VERY SLIGHTLY UNDER 50 PERCENT. ON THE OTHER HAND, GIVEN THE CONCLUSION THAT, UNDER PR, THE LEFT NEEDS ONLY 48 PERCENT OF THE POPULAR VOTE TO WIN IN THE ASSEMBLY, THE MAJORITY WOULD HAVE PRACTICALLY NO CHANCE OF WINNING THE ELECTION.

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PARIS 20868 03 OF 03 191401Z

TIONS UNDER THAT SYSTEM. THIS IS PRESUMABLY WHY, TOGETHER WITH RPR OPPOSITION, THE GOF DECIDED NOT TO INTRODUCE A BILL IN PARLIAMENT TO CHANGE THE VOTING SYSTEM. ONE MINOR CONSOLATION TO THE GOF OF PR IS THAT, BECAUSE THE AMPLIFIER EFFECT OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM WOULD NOT APPLY, IT WOULD BE ABLE TO MINIMIZE ITS LOSSES IN THE EVENT OF A LEFT VICTORY. THEREFORE, ONLY IF THE GOF BELIEVED IT HAD NO CHANCE OF WINNING NEXT YEAR'S ELECTION WOULD IT HAVE AN INTEREST IN INTRODUCING PR. AS THE POLLING SEASON GETS UNDERWAY, WE WILL ATTEMPT TO MAKE THEIR PREDICABLY CONFLICTING FINDINGS INTELLIGIBLE IN THE LIGHT OF THE ABOVE MODELS.

HARTMAN

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## Message Attributes

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